

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 HA-05 AID-05 FDRE-00 AGRE-00

EB-08 ICA-11 COME-00 TRSE-00 L-03 INRE-00 CIAE-00

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FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2775

INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY BANJUL

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE USUN NEW YORK 03105

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: GA, EAID

SUBJECT: GAMBIAN REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

1. A GAMBIAN SPECIAL MISSION COMPOSED OF MINISTER OF WORKS AND COMMUNICATIONS BAKARY LANDING KUTI SANYANG AND THE GAMBIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE FAO, AMBASSADOR WADDA, CALLED ON AMBASSADOR YOUNG AUGUST 4. THE PURPOSE OF THEIR VISIT WAS TO SEEK ASSISTANCE IN CONNECTION WITH WHAT THEY DESCRIBED AS A NATIONAL DISASTER RESULTING FROM THE FAILURE OF THE GAMBIAN ELECTRICAL SYSTEM.

2. THEY EXPLAINED THAT THE DROUGHT EXISTING FOR SEVERAL YEARS HAD CONTRIBUTED TO THE BREAKDOWN OF THE GAMBIA'S MAJOR ELECTRICAL PLANT LAST YEAR. THE PLANT HAD BEEN OVERWORKED AND A LACK OF WATER FOR THE COOLING SYSTEM HAD BROUGHT ABOUT THE FAILURE. SINCE THEN THEY HAD PURCHASED THREE STANDBY GENERATORS IN EUROPE. BRITISH ROYAL AIRFORCE PLANES HAD FLOWN THESE GENERATORS TO THE GAMBIA. ONE OF THE THREE HAD SINCE BURNED OUT. THE OTHER TWO WERE BEING USED FOR HOSPITALS AND EMERGENCY PURPOSES. HOWEVER, BE-

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CAUSE THEY ARE STANDBY GENERATORS THEY COULD NOT BE DEPENDENT UPON FOR STEADY USE. IT WAS A MATTER OF TIME UNTIL ONE OR BOTH BROKE DOWN.

3. THE GAMBIANS HAD COME TO THE UN TO SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM SYG WALDHEIM. AS A RESULT OF THEIR MEETINGS IN NEW YORK, THE UNDP HAS ALLOTTED MONEY FOR THE PURCHASE OF THREE

GENERATORS IN THE U.S. HOWEVER, BEFORE MAKING THE PURCHASES HERE THE UNDP HAS ASKED THE GAMBIANS TO ARRANGE TRANSPORTATION TO GAMBIA FOR THE GENERATORS. MINISTER SANYANG AND AMBASSADOR WADDA, THEREFORE, CAME TO AMBASSADOR YOUNG TO REQUEST OFFICIALLY THAT THE U.S. PROVIDE AIR TRANSPORT FOR THE GENERATORS TO THE GAMBIA.

4. AMBASSADOR YOUNG RESPONDED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE WAS INVESTIGATING THE POSSIBILITY OF ASSISTANCE. HE WOULD CABLE THEIR REQUEST TO WASHINGTON AND INFORM THEM OF THE USG RESPONSE.

5. THE GAMBIANS URGED THAT A DECISION BE REACHED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE EMERGENCY GENERATORS NOW UNDER USE BE SUPPLEMENTED BEFORE THEY BROKE DOWN. GAMBIA WAS STRUGGLING TO BOLSTER ITS ECONOMY BY PROMOTING TOURISM. BEGINNING IN LATE SEPTEMBER ALL HOTELS WERE BOOKED FULL FOR TOURISTS. HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT FEARED THAT IF THE NEWS THAT THE HOTELS MIGHT NOT HAVE ELECTRICITY BECOMES WIDE-SPREAD, TOURISTS WOULD CANCEL THEIR VISITS. THE RESULT WOULD BE DISASTER FOR GAMBIA'S ECONOMY. THE GAMBIA MISSION IS PREPARED TO TRAVEL TO WASHINGTON IMMEDIATELY IF THIS WOULD PROVE USEFUL IN EXPLAINING THE SITUATION.

6. SINCE THIS MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR YOUNG, MESSRS SANYANG AND WADDA HAVE HAD FURTHER MEETINGS WITH OFFICIALS IN SYG WALDHEIM'S OFFICE. THEY CALLED USUN TO INFORM US LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT THE SYG'S DEPUTY WILL SEND A REQUEST TO USUN FOR USG ASSISTANCE IN TRANSPORTING THE GENERATORS. A SECOND SUGGESTION, WHICH APPARENTLY THEY RECEIVED FROM UN OFFICIALS, WAS THAT THEY ENQUIRE WHETHER PART OF THE SPACE ON THE U.S. PLANE CARRYING THE UN SECRETARY GENERALS SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE AHTISAARI TO NAMIBIA THIS WEEKEND COULD NOT BE USED TO CARRY THE GENERATORS. YOUNG

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